

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY  
THROUGH INNOVATIVE FORCE PRE-POSITIONING

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## ABSTRACT

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In an era of trans-national terrorist organizations, rogue nations and international uncertainty, a successful U.S. National Security Strategy must be supported by flexible and responsive military power. Sea, air, and land component forces and resources should be innovatively pre-positioned and available for expeditious employment in the world's contentious regions. The maneuver area afforded by international common areas must be maximized to deliver appropriate lethality through a joint, agile, and integrated force.

Forward presence is a key element of the national security framework of the United States. It reflects the values of most Americans, is consistent with a grand strategy of primacy, and is articulated in both the National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy. Based on the uncertain nature of emerging threats, and the range of military operations (ROMO) in which U.S. military forces may participate, traditional thinking in terms of forward presence must be discarded in lieu of a pre-positioned force that leverages technology and exploits the sea as the world's largest international maneuver space.

The Joint Operations Concepts (JOpsC) were articulated as a means of defining the path to the development of future strategies, systems, technologies, and procedures, and provide a set of guidelines describing how the Joint Force intends to operate during the next 15-20 years. Accordingly, it is appropriate to consider future forward presence initiatives through the lens of JOpsC common core capabilities. An effective sea-based pre-positioning system of the future must facilitate the introduction of tailored, capabilities-based, and persistent joint expeditionary forces in accordance with JOpsC guidance. While continuing to maintain the Sea Base as a future vision, the U.S. should not squander the opportunity to enhance its national security while waiting on the advancement of technology to make the Sea Base a reality. The U.S. should seek the available, nearer-term benefits of a Joint Pre-positioning and Assembly Concept (JPAC), integrating shore and sea-based pre-positioning sites, as part of the way ahead in innovative force pre-positioning.



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## ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY THROUGH INNOVATIVE MILITARY FORCE PRE-POSITIONING

In an era of trans-national terrorist organizations, rogue nations, and international uncertainty, a successful U.S. National Security Strategy must be supported by flexible and responsive military power. Sea, air and land component forces and resources should be innovatively pre-positioned and available for expeditious employment in the world's contentious regions. The maneuver area and forward staging opportunities afforded by international sea space must be maximized to deliver appropriate lethality through a joint, agile, and integrated force.

A successful U.S. National Security Strategy cannot be constrained by the traditional paradigms associated with forward presence policies of a by-gone era. The United States must continue to hone all elements of power in order to remain prepared to deal convincingly with both nation states and non-state entities. However, when faced with the rationale of a rogue state or the destructive potential of a terrorist organization, the only effective means of conveying the United States' commitment to the principles of freedom and democracy, the protection of its citizens, and its support for friends and allies, may be the presence of military might. That presence must be an integral part of a coherent national security philosophy that seamlessly interlaces the values of its people with the development, sustainment, and employment of all forms of national power in pursuit of national interests. In essence, the national security strategy should be the methodology (ways) through which the country's available resources (means) are used to protect its citizens and sustain the nation's way of life (ends).

Today's international environment era can be defined in both negative and positive terms. The absence of an overarching struggle between superpowers has created opportunities for many states to experience national self-determination, enjoy the benefits of a society based on the principles of freedom, and the wealth associated with participation in the global marketplace. Unfortunately, in some regions of the world the removal of repressive force has also meant an increase in ethnic and religious-based strife. The dissolution of societal and economic structure has created a vacuum in leadership and basic domestic services that has been all too readily filled by forces of lawlessness and religious fanaticism. While some fledgling democracies have easily joined the family of nations, there have also been states that have succumbed to the tyranny of evil, floundered into chaos, and become breeding grounds for terrorism and insurrection. Rogue factions at work in such regions often endeavor to gain power through the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Political or religious extremists may seek to



repress the local populace and coerce the international community through tactics of fear and intimidation that include threats of WMD employment.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, the United States can counter, or preempt hostile acts of its adversaries by using its vast resources in an integrated and complimentary manner. Elements of diplomatic, informational, economic and military power may be coordinated in a withering demonstration of force that is unmatched by any other entity. Militarily, a broad range of sea, air and land-based weapons systems, and enormous destructive potential, can be employed in an overwhelming manner to detect and exploit enemy weaknesses while minimizing the threat of casualties to American and allied forces.<sup>2</sup>

The United States currently enjoys tremendous technological superiority facilitating great advantages in military and economic power that are unprecedented in modern history. No other state or entity is capable of challenging American military might in a traditional setting with any realistic hope of success. This power advantage does not mean that American-led forces of freedom and democracy are welcomed throughout the world. Conventional might is countered by rogue nations and insurgent groups who possess minority, yet fervent, beliefs as well as weapons of enormous destructive potential. At the same time, nations with whom the United States has been aligned for many years have experienced a subtle backlash in support for efforts deemed quintessentially American. Without the impending threat of communist invasion, U.S. forces stationed abroad that were once seen as an assurance of common defense against a mutual foe are now seen by some nations as an unnecessary occupation force.

#### **NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY (NSS)**

The national security framework within the United States is shaped, at its most basic level, by the values and experiences of a majority of those it protects. Within the United States, the principles of freedom, democracy, and free market economics are central to any argument regarding the formulation of a Grand Strategy. Bolstered by success in the Cold War, and rededicated to the protection of its way of life by the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the United States has adopted a strategic vision most closely akin to primacy.

The United States possesses unprecedented -- and unequalled -- strength and influence in the world. Sustained by faith in the principles of liberty, and the value of a free society, this position comes with unparalleled responsibilities, obligations, and opportunity. The great strength of this nation must be used to promote a balance of power that favors freedom.<sup>3</sup>

? United States National Security Strategy, 2002

Primacy theorists believe that an acceptable world order requires that a favorable balance of power must be maintained to dissuade potential enemies and comfort allied and coalition partners. Status atop the hierarchy of nations must be sustained, precluding the emergence of hostile competitors or regional hegemony, while liberal economic policies are used to promote an interconnected world market and the spread of democracy. A decided preeminence of power is viewed as an enabler within the world community to sustain values, support allies and deter enemy aggression.<sup>4</sup>

Through its national security vision, the United States seeks to cultivate a peaceful international climate, global prosperity and fundamental individual freedoms through the endorsement of democratic principles and an inclusive and integrated world economy. Homeland security and vital interests are protected and sustained through overwhelming national power that prefers, but is not constrained by, international alliances. While remaining appropriately poised to counter potential adversaries from within the ranks of nation-states, the United States today is confronted with an international environment that is increasingly influenced by super-empowered groups or individuals.<sup>5</sup> These non-state actors seek to obtain massive destructive capability that is underwritten by technology and fueled by misguided fanaticism.

Defending the nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the United States Government.<sup>6</sup> This commitment requires the employment of all forms of power to protect the fundamental freedoms of its citizens against any aggressor – preferably before the antagonist reaches American soil. Maintaining the ability to deter or defeat adversaries abroad speaks directly to the military element of power and the pre-positioning or permanent stationing of selected forces overseas. The NSS touts the forward presence of American forces as one of “...the most profound symbols of U.S. commitments to allies and friends...” and recognizes the stabilizing impact forward deployed forces have had on numerous trouble spots around the globe.<sup>7</sup> The forward presence policy in place today is a by-product of the Cold War and is largely unchanged since the ‘Iron Curtain’ first cloaked Eastern Europe. Positioning of U.S. forces abroad continues to reflect containment era thinking.

While initiatives are underway to restructure troop strength in Europe and Korea, and modify naval force deployments to a more responsive framework, these changes are adaptations of the traditional paradigm. The threat capturing most headlines today does not come from nation states that possess a recognized governmental system. Nor does this threat have traditional envoys that interact openly within the international community and offer an in-road to diplomatic efforts. The most immediate threat faced by America today comes from

shadowy terrorist networks and non-state actors, motivated primarily by religious extremism, and committed to the destruction of the American way of life. Consequently, the utility of most forms of soft power is minimal.<sup>8</sup> These terrorist networks are insidious, well-financed, and global in reach. Their characteristics dictate a strategy of military deterrence or interdiction abroad as the optimal course of action in defending America at home.

#### **NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY (NMS)**

Through the National Military Strategy (NMS), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) focuses America's uniformed services on the priorities of winning the war on terrorism, enhancing joint warfighting and transforming to meet future challenges. This framework of effort is further refined through three fundamental objectives that have been developed in support of the NSS: 1) Protect the United States against external attacks and aggression, 2) Prevent conflict and surprise attack, and 3) Prevail against adversaries.<sup>9</sup> A methodology that flows from the NSS and is critical to the achievement of each of these NMS goals is forward military presence; simply stated, deterring and defeating enemies as far from the American homeland as possible. Preventing conflict or surprise attack requires the ability to immediately and decisively employ a professional, combat-ready, and appropriately positioned force. Forward-based forces are essential in creating the most favorable conditions possible for the attainment of national objectives.

The linkage between winning the war on terror and achieving the specific NMS objectives of ...Protect, Prevent, and Prevail... is clear and imperative. But just as important are the CJCS priorities of enhancing joint warfighting and transforming to meet future challenges – particularly in the area of forward presence policy.<sup>10</sup> The development of more innovative ways of pre-positioning forces must be in step with the demeanor of the international community and outpace the efforts of nefarious forces to harm or counteract the positive impact of United States' military forces stationed overseas.

#### **FORWARD PRESENCE OPTIONS**

For more than half a century, the United States has employed a forward presence policy that has been a by-product of World War II and the east-west confrontation that characterized the Cold War. U.S. military forces have been permanently stationed abroad in a number of locations that served to reassure our allies and contain communism while facilitating a more rapid response to aggression. The fundamental rationale for maintaining a forward presence of military force continues to be relevant and includes five principal components. First, forward deployed military forces demonstrate a commitment to the safety and security of U.S. citizens

and their interests abroad. A symbol of American power and resolve, the presence of military might sends a message of deterrence to would-be enemies and reassures friends and allies that the influence of the world's lone superpower underwrites their lawful activities within the international community. Second, alliances are accorded immediate credibility when supported by the United States through the co-location of forces. The prestige of states participating in the alliance is enhanced while military to military relationships are cultivated. Professional dialogue between members of the alliance facilitates improvements in tactics, techniques, and procedures yielding enhanced overall readiness. Third, regional stability is improved. If the United States deems it appropriate to absorb the enormous cost of sustaining a military force in a particular region, then clearly that region is of great interest to the world's foremost economic and military power. An initiation of hostilities in the vicinity of forward deployed forces could easily result in American intervention. Fourth, forward deployed forces provide a crisis response capability that can be rapidly executed. Even America's most ready forces may face prolonged response timelines due to geographic constraints if stationed within the United States. Employment timelines are minimized as the United States is capable of responding quickly when it is deemed appropriate. Finally, military forces stationed abroad promote United States influence and access within the international community.<sup>11</sup>

If the rationale supporting military forward presence remains relevant, and stationing forces abroad continues to be endorsed as a critical element of both the NSS and NMS, then why should changes to the traditional forward presence policy be contemplated? What, if anything, has changed? Today's world has changed dramatically in terms of the nature of conflict. During much of the past 50 years, U.S. forces have been stationed abroad in a manner appropriate for containing the spread of Soviet-backed communism. The USSR's collapse has provided well-documented opportunities for religious and ethnic self-determination in a number of repressed regions of the world. Changing power structures have occurred within some existing countries while various international boundaries have shifted. Even regions not directly influenced by the absence of the Soviet Union are threatened by the availability of weapons once tightly controlled within the eastern bloc. Trans-national terrorism has been fueled by religious fanaticism that is ruthless and destructive in nature. Opponents of the United States are no longer necessarily located within set geographic boundaries, therefore permanent basing of U.S. forces may not reflect optimal force positioning. Terrorists pose an increased force protection risk to stationary forces due to the disproportionately large destructive effects of a small number of weapons. Basing forces exclusively within the boundaries of a 'friendly' nation does not guarantee a secure environment due to the terrorist nature of the threat.

The technological advantage enjoyed by U.S. military forces has also changed the dynamics of the forward presence equation. The lethality of U.S. weapons systems could equate to a force structure reduction in immediate response forces and on-station resources. Dramatic improvements in connectivity and networking diminish the importance of collocation and enhance force agility. Initiatives related to future Maritime Pre-positioning Ships, high-speed connectors for personnel and materiel transfer, and improved platform sea-keeping enhance the United States' ability to exploit international common areas.

#### ANALYSIS AND ALTERNATIVES

Considering the enduring rationale supporting at least some form of forward presence, what analysis of forward presence alternatives can be made? Forward presence can be assessed in terms of strategic movement methodology – the means by which forces and equipment are moved to the objective area, and in terms of an overarching strategy. The strategic movement of assets may be accomplished by airlift, sealift or through pre-positioning. Each methodology plays a vital role in supporting forward presence and each has distinctive strengths and weaknesses. While airlift travels the distance between points of embarkation and debarkation most expeditiously, airlift capacity is relatively small. Throughput via airlift is further exacerbated by airfield and ramp space availability. Airlift may be a suitable choice to insert forces quickly in support of a limited objective or to assist in sustainment over an extended period, but it cannot support the rapid movement of credible combat power (brigade-sized force) in a compressed timeline.

Sealift provides great lift capacity at a very slow transit speed. Sealift assets which must be provided with external security support, are particularly vulnerable when passing through transit choke points, and require debarkation port facilities to ensure offload timeliness and efficiency. Surface vessels are an outstanding strategic lift choice in support of an operation involving an extended planning timeline, however sealift is not a crisis response lift asset.

Pre-positioning programs provide military assets ashore and afloat to reduce demand on air and surface lift while also minimizing force staging, assembly, and closure time. Army land-based pre-positioned stocks consist of equipment to support 3 heavy brigades in Europe, 2 brigades in Southwest Asia, and 1 brigade in the Pacific. The Marine Corps also maintains pre-positioned equipment ashore in Europe.<sup>12</sup>

The current means of fulfilling the afloat forward presence mission, while minimizing personnel operating tempo, is through the Military Sealift Command's Afloat Pre-positioning Force (APF). The APF was established in 1980s and consists of 39 ships in the Mediterranean

Sea, Indian Ocean, and Pacific Ocean, supporting the Maritime Pre-positioning Force (MPF), the Combat Pre-positioning Ships (CPS) and the Logistics Pre-positioning Ships (LPS). The MPF supports the Marine Corps, the CPS supports the Army and the LPS supports the Navy, Air Force and the Defense Logistics Agency. APF ships, which are commercially owned and leased by the Department of Defense, provide roll on – roll off access and container carrying capability. The APF's primary function is to facilitate compressed deployment and employment timelines through the pre-positioning of equipment in support of brigade-sized forces.<sup>13</sup> Personnel are airlifted into theater and 'marry up' with their equipment at nearby seaports only on an 'as needed' basis, precluding the need for time-consuming and costly inter-theater equipment transportation. APF equipment is typically moved ashore while inport, but a limited capability also exists for an at sea or 'in-stream' offload.<sup>14</sup> The APF concept has proven its value during employment in Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. However in both cases, the offloads took place in a permissive environment with APF arrival to assembly time not a critical factor. While certainly better than 3-4 weeks for strategic lift to move equipment from the continental U.S., it may still take up to a week to position APF ships in preparation for offload. The offload and assembly (matching equipment with operators) process for MPF shipping may take as much as 10 days, and with the inherent limitations of in stream capability, a benign port facility is a requirement.<sup>15</sup>

There are three fundamental forward presence alternatives that can be employed. The U.S. can maintain the status quo through a traditional forward presence posture. Forces can be retracted within America's own borders and sent forward only as necessary. Or, international sea and air space can be exploited to place military force in a forward-deployed posture of readiness without continuous imposition on foreign soil.

If American forces are withdrawn to U.S. territory as some have suggested, budgetary savings in terms of foreign-based infrastructure can be realized and the rhetoric casting the United States in the image of a super-bully, vice superpower, could be squelched. Withdrawing forces to the United States may be misinterpreted as a desire to abdicate America's role in international processes. Potential enemies could be emboldened to act due to a perceived absence of power, causing, vice suppressing, regional conflict. Additional effort and expense would be incurred in creating and supporting multi-lateral training opportunities to reassure allies and maintain a foothold in the international arena.

By maintaining or employing some relatively similar variation of the traditional foreign presence posture, the United States can continue to demonstrate commitment to interests abroad and provide a crisis response capability. A sizable force structure of personnel and

equipment can be permanently land-based overseas (much as they have been since the conclusion of World War II), with some complimentary, and relatively fewer, assets pre-positioned afloat. The viability of the United States' current forward presence structure is clearly in question as its responsiveness may not be sufficient depending on the location of a crisis that might arise. Forces will be largely stationary, presenting a target for terrorists. Without the specter of an opposing superpower bent on world domination, the rationale of paying the economic price of maintaining forces in a fixed geographic area that is no longer at the "tip of the spear" now becomes suspect. Also changing global dynamics during the past 15 years have cooled the international community's once warm embrace of American service men and women stationed on foreign shores as some nations no longer feel threatened or feel allied superpower protection is necessary.

An alternative to the extremes of a traditional forward presence policy or basing most forces on home soil, is to develop the capability of providing a largely non-intrusive forward presence based in the international common areas of the world's most contentions regions. By taking a sea-centric approach to pre-positioning, virtually all operational imperatives of the forward presence mission could be fulfilled while minimizing force protection issues and eliminating the effects of negative international public opinion. Publicizing operational reach of pre-positioned forces within a particular region, even without disclosing its exact location, would continue to demonstrate commitment to U.S. interests and enhance regional stability. Participation in a periodic bilateral or multi-lateral exercise program would sustain the integrity of alliances. And most certainly, a sea base would facilitate the maintenance of a crisis response capability.<sup>16</sup> However, a commensurate level of influence with and access within regional nations, cultivated over time by permanently land-based forces, would probably not be realized if U.S. forward presence was derived exclusively from the sea.

## SEA BASE

At the center of the Naval Service's vision for future forward presence capabilities, and one of the Navy's transformational objectives, is the Sea Base.<sup>17</sup> Like the APF, the Sea Base is intended to enhance forward presence and reduce force deployment and employment time lines by swiftly pre-positioning equipment needed to support fly-in echelons of personnel. Unlike the APF, the Sea Base will be designed to support force reception, staging, assembly and forward movement exclusively from an at sea environment.<sup>18</sup> Forces flowing into theater will coordinate with the Sea Base while en route to ensure a tailored equipment package is prepared for offload. Following arrival at the Sea Base, personnel will 'marry up' with

equipment, complete the assembly process, and move to the objective via high speed surface craft or aerial insertion. Typically operating 25-100 miles from the coastline, the Sea Base will be capable of sustaining forces ashore up to 240 miles from land, taking advantage of the maneuver area afforded by international sea space.<sup>19</sup> The Sea Base itself is not envisioned as a single vessel or floating structure, but rather a collection of vessels that can be shaped as necessary to support the mission at hand. Intended to facilitate the introduction of combat capable and persistent forces across the spectrum of conflict, the ability to rapidly close the area of operations, effectively employ and reliably sustain will be fundamental to the Sea Base. The time line for Sea Base offload and assembly process is expected to be dramatically reduced from its MPF predecessor to an amazing 24-48 hours.<sup>20</sup> The Sea Base could facilitate offensive and defensive power projection, provide regional command and control, serve as a joint integrated logistics base and enable follow-on force introduction to the area of operations. Ideally, Sea Base mobility would facilitate optimal placement of the joint force within a particular region to support national security objectives and enhance force protection capabilities. Based on the progress of operations ashore and the level of support engaged forces require, platforms within the Sea Base could disperse to execute individual missions, or minimize enemy targeting efforts. Strategic lift pre-positioning ships and high speed intra-theater lift vessels, with heavy weather at-sea transfer capability, could be integrated with Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Groups to fulfill tasking ranging from multi-lateral "show the flag" exercises to decisive combat operations.<sup>21</sup>

#### JOINT PREPOSITIONING AND ASSEMBLY CONCEPT (JPAC)

An alternative approach to the future forward presence issue that may be more readily achievable is to leverage existing capabilities within the constraints of today's international climate. As with the Sea Base, the JPAC would be intended to allow U.S. forces to leverage international maneuver space dominance and technological strength to provide a joint military forward presence that is fully integrated, agile, and responsive in all warfare domains. Rather than positioning all equipment in an afloat Sea Base component, pre-positioned forces would be enabled by an integrated system of shore-based and afloat facilities. These sites must facilitate the fielding of combat-ready forces, swiftly traversing assembly interface points, to apply an appropriate level of military force when and where needed in support of national objectives. Equipment supporting low intensity tasking and forcible entry capability would be continuously afloat to take full advantage of the inherently responsive nature of maritime forces. Equipment required to support sustained combat operations or follow-on forces would be maintained, and



flow through, regional JPAC shore (JPAC-S) sites, optimally located within 1000 miles of potential areas of unrest and conflict. The JPAC-S sites would not be areas of large force concentration. They would be manned only as required for site security, force protection, maintenance and logistics. High speed connectors would position tailored equipment packages within the area of operations as required in less than 72 hours, linking with operators afloat (under the Sea Base's protective umbrella), or at an established beachhead or logistics depot ashore, in preparation for movement to the objective. The added flexibility provided by JPAC-S facilitates enhanced readiness verification, reduced afloat pre-positioned shipping requirements, and more focused strategic airlift. The access afforded by JPAC-S would facilitate increased equipment maintenance, modification and upgrade opportunities. The presence of equipment within the AOR could be used as a springboard for increased military to military training and interface as well as serve as an opportunity to train with the pre-positioned gear within the potential combat environment. And finally, with significant resources already staged within the region, strategic airlift could be better focused on remaining high demand/low density equipment.

#### JOINT OPERATIONS CONCEPTS (JOPSC)

In response to the uncertainty of the future, the U.S. has shifted its focus from a threat-based force development system to a capabilities-based, concept-driven Joint Force planning process. Future force capabilities must be able to support Joint Force employment across the full range of military operations (ROMO).<sup>22</sup> From humanitarian assistance to sustained combat operations, selective and scalable capabilities must be available to apply the appropriate level of support, deterrence or lethality to any contingency. America's national security and national military strategies must have a global perspective of full spectrum dominance, a non-contiguous operational philosophy, and a "born joint " integration mentality.<sup>23</sup>

Full spectrum dominance requires the ability to complete the decision-making cycle at a greater rate than any potential adversary. U.S. and allied forces must expeditiously turn processed information into informed decisions and actions that shape the battle space and enable a selective application of force. Once behind in the decision cycle, the adversary is immediately placed in a reactive mode, forced to contend with countering U.S. and allied actions rather than focusing on his own objectives. A fully networked communications architecture will enable the rapid development of an integrated and cohesive force, a comprehensive common operating picture, and force-wide situational awareness, regardless of the geographic displacement of the commander or friendly force units. At the foundation of full spectrum

dominance is a joint warfighting philosophy, instilled through a continuum of joint education and a commitment to the acquisition of systems that are designed, built, and delivered in a joint service context.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, the U.S. found itself in a period of relative peace and dramatic economic prosperity. Rather than rest on the conventional wisdom that U.S. military power held such a large advantage that it would easily outpace any competitor throughout the foreseeable future, visionary leaders such as then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili, advocated seizing this period as an opportunity to enhance future national security.<sup>24</sup> An opportunity appeared to be at hand to “leap forward” in military technology, techniques, and innovation. Dramatic improvements were realized in weapons precision and lethality, and in the decision-making agility and in the situational awareness spawned by a fusion of real-time information sharing, intelligence collection collaboration. In order to keep pace with an uncertain (and increasingly lethal and technologically advanced) future, U.S. civilian and uniformed military leadership continue to pursue a dramatic sea change in the manner in which military forces are developed, equipped, trained, sustained and applied as a means of imposing the national will. A paradigm shift in conventional wisdom and approach more than hardware, a sense of innovation drives the transformation of a force based on a perceived threat to one based on capabilities. It is within this transformational context that the Joint Operations Concepts (JOpsC) were articulated as a means of defining the path to the development of future strategies, systems, technologies, and procedures. The JOpsC provide a set of guidelines describing how the Joint Force intends to operate during the next 15-20 years.<sup>25</sup> They establish an operational context for transformation, linking strategic guidance with the application of capabilities. Conceptual in nature, JOpsC create a framework for the development of future joint concepts. They also provide a foundation for acquisition choices in association with changes in doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF).<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, it is appropriate to consider future forward presence initiatives through the lens of the following JOpsC common core capabilities:

#### **Joint Battlespace Understanding**

Achieve common understanding of all dimensions of the battlespace throughout the joint force.<sup>27</sup> First and foremost, those operating within either the Sea Base or JPAC construct must possess a joint knowledge base and speak a common operational language. They must be conversant in the strengths, limitations and employment considerations of systems within the force, regardless of service origin. Force leadership must have a “joint service” background

grounded in joint education and honed through participation in integrated training that reinforces the advantages of a seamless and complimentary joint force.

Also fundamental to any future forward presence initiative is a networked collaboration architecture that facilitates the creation of a common operating picture that is available to the commander as well as his subordinates. Real-time information-sharing must be leveraged by the joint force to create broad-based situational awareness and serve as an enabler for decision-makers, planners, and operators.

### **Decision-Making Agility**

Make joint decisions and take action throughout the joint force faster than the opponent.<sup>28</sup> A common knowledge base and network-centric communications architecture should set the conditions within either the Sea Base or JPAC for the joint force commander to act with greater decision-making agility than an adversary. The knowledge-based advantage held by the joint force commander enables him to think and react innovatively, keeping his opponent off balance and operating from a reactive mode. While both future forward presence concepts should facilitate the attainment of full spectrum dominance, use of the JPAC may enhance the pace at which force may be applied by reducing the interface points through which equipment and/or forces flowing to the objective area must transition thus increasing force throughput. An interface point is a physical change in medium or conveyance supporting the ship to shore, air to shore, or shore to shore movement of expeditionary forces. As an example, when equipment moves from MPF shipping to the objective area via some type of air or surface craft it passes through interface points between the MPF ship and the landing craft and between the landing craft and the objective area. The transition of equipment through these interface points restricts the rate at which the equipment flows ashore due to factors such as staging capacity of the MPF ship, capacity and speed of the air or surface landing craft, environmental conditions, availability of port facilities, or capacity of beach landing sites. In the Sea Base concept, all force reception, staging, assembly and forward movement flows through afloat platforms and multiple interface points. With some equipment in regional pre-position sites ashore and moved directly to the objective area or logistics depot via large capacity, high speed connectors, the number of interface points associated with the JPAC concept could be reduced allowing actions to be carried out more quickly.

### **Operational Flexibility**

Adapt in scope, scale, and method as the situation requires.<sup>29</sup> Both the Sea Base and JPAC concepts are adaptable based on the situation at hand. Many variables such as force

size, capability, insertion methodology, follow-on force support and force protection requirements may be considered in tailoring the force footprint. The characteristics of a particular adversary or the potential for additional tasking within the same area of responsibility may dictate the need for innovative force packaging, shaping forces that are dissimilar in content, but equally effective given the dynamics of each situation. JPAC may provide some additional flexibility by increasing the number and source of available assets within the region and providing an established access point for follow-on force support. However, JPAC also presents additional force protection challenges ashore at the JPAC-S site as well as throughout the transit route from the JPAC-S site to the objective area.

### **Rapid Deployment & Execution**

Rapidly deploy selected portions of the Joint Force that can immediately transition to execution, even in the absence of developed infrastructure.<sup>30</sup> By definition, pre-positioned forces are expeditionary in nature. Both the Sea Base and JPAC assets can rapidly exploit the “common areas,” operating and sustaining exclusively within international sea space providing an effective crisis response capability. The JPAC-S viability in a crisis response scenario requiring stealth, or at least some element of surprise, may be minimal due to its stationary, and presumably known, point of origin. Once initial phases of the crisis response operation are completed, follow-on forces could be rapidly introduced through either the Sea Base or JPAC to support and sustain operations of greater magnitude.

### **Operational Endurance**

Create and sustain continuous pressure throughout the battlespace for as little or as long as it takes to accomplish strategic or operational aims.<sup>31</sup> Working through a networked collection of assets and capabilities, both the Sea Base and JPAC concepts possess credible operational endurance, providing a command & control and sustainment base that can operate continuously for extended periods of time. Additionally, the mere presence of Sea Base or JPAC assets could be used as a deterrent without ever placing “boots on the ground.” However as we seek to define our “way ahead” with respect to military force pre-positioning and the longevity of these precious resources, recent lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) mandate examination. Extensive commitment of both Army and Marine Corps pre-positioned assets to the war in Iraq will require reconstitution, and most likely replacement, of an estimated \$2 billion worth of material. While largely successful in supporting the initial phase of OIF, a Government Accounting Office (GAO) study acknowledged that some significant issues with pre-positioned military assets were noted. First some pre-positioned equipment was

outdated, lacked essential upgrades, or failed to match equipment soldiers had trained with prior to deployment. Spare parts shortfalls and limited information regarding pre-positioned stock sustainment requirements reduced the combat readiness of some outfits. Finally, distribution system issues within U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility overwhelmed the logistics chain and slowed the flow of resources to front line troops. While some issues with pre-position stock viability were known prior to the commencement of OIF, an institutionalized training, maintenance and assessment plan, as depicted in Figure 1, directly involving the pre-positioned equipment may have mitigated some of the noted issues.

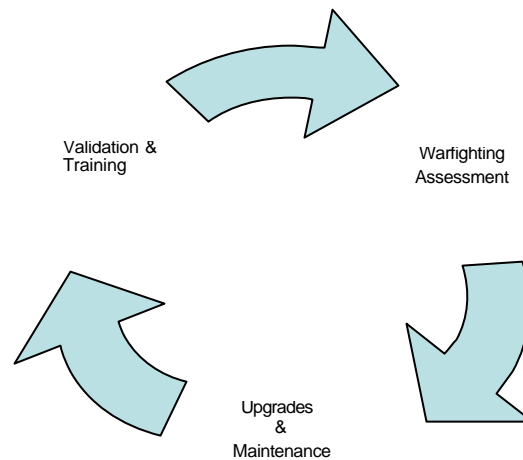


FIGURE 1. CONTINUOUS PRE-POSITIONING SYSTEM LIFECYCLE

#### **Innovative Application of Power**

Disintegrate, disorient, dislocate, or destroy any opponent with a combination of lethal and non-lethal means.<sup>32</sup> Both the Sea Base and JPAC concepts can facilitate the development and dissemination of actionable intelligence and situational awareness through a network centric communications architecture that supports the application of warfighting precision and lethality. Advanced technology will be combined with an operational climate conducive to the innovative application of force to deter or defeat adversaries as appropriate. Movement of, or activity within, Sea Base or JPAC assets could be used as information operations tools. The regional presence of pre-positioned military resources would assist in setting the conditions for successful information operations. Simply directing Sea Base or afloat pre-positioning assets closer to a contentious area could be used to distract or deter opposition forces without

involving territorial sovereignty issues. Heightened activity at a JPAC-S site could also be used to signal that the employment of military force within the region was being contemplated.

### **Logistics Range & Flexibility**

Conduct deployment and sustainment activities in support of multiple simultaneous, distributed, decentralized battles and campaigns.<sup>33</sup> While both concepts possess logistics supportability in a decentralized battlespace, the JPAC presents greater flexibility in reach and methodology. Again, particularly in the early phases of an operation, fewer interface points and enhanced throughput make JPAC an attractive option to influence multiple engagements simultaneously.

### **Interagency & Coalition Coordination**

Accomplish all of the above in an interagency and multi-national context.<sup>34</sup> Despite an unparalleled ability to dominate the battlefield, the U.S. has often failed to achieve its overarching objectives due to an inability to effectively achieve interagency & coalition integration, particularly during post-conflict (phase 4) operations. The U.S. has been involved in some form of nation-building or post-conflict operations every 18-24 months since the end of the Cold War in places like Panama, Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq.<sup>35</sup> Phase 4 preparations have typically received limited emphasis, or were incomplete when operations commenced. Planning has been inadequate and execution lacked common focus or direction.<sup>36</sup> Military forces often completed phase 4 tasks better suited for other U.S. Government (USG) agencies, separate agencies operated within “stovepipes” (and at times unintentionally at diverging purposes), and all were slow to react to the dynamic nature of the post-conflict environment. The bottom line is that interaction with the interagency must be a ‘cradle to grave’ proposition – beginning with initial scenario planning, enhanced during joint training, and fully integrated in execution. The interagency and coalition planning must be fully integrated in either the Sea Base or JPAC concepts.

Dialogue within the joint and interagency community regarding the optimal method of executing the forward presence mission should be continuous and viewed as an engine for transforming not only the manner in which the U.S. prepositions military forces and projects power abroad, but rather a springboard for interaction with potential coalition partners and an unmistakable sign of global reach and deterrence for would-be adversaries. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld captured the essence of future capabilities in a January 2002 address as follows:

We need to change not only the capabilities at our disposal, but also how we think about war. All the high-tech weapons in the world will not transform the US armed forces unless we also transform the way we think, the way we train, the way we exercise and the way we fight.<sup>37</sup>

? Joint Operations Concepts (JOpsC), 2003

## CONCLUSION

Forward presence is a key element of the national security framework of the United States. It reflects the values of most Americans, is consistent with a grand strategy of primacy, and is articulated in both the National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy. A signal to friends and foes, the presence of military forces abroad is a clear indication that the U.S. is willing to risk both blood and treasure to protect against aggression, prevent conflict and surprise attack, and prevail against its adversaries. As the world's lone superpower, the United States must be prepared to contend with threats ranging from traditional nation-states to rogue nations and trans-national entities. Based on the uncertain nature of emerging threats, and the ROMO in which U.S. military forces may participate, traditional thinking in terms of forward presence must be discarded in lieu of a more responsive, lethal and integrated pre-positioned force that leverages technology and exploits the sea as the world's largest international maneuver space.

The U.S. has made some use of afloat pre-positioning since the early 1980s through the APF. Although effective in providing OIF support, the limitations of the APF process are well documented. APF possesses an at sea offload capability that is extremely cumbersome and can be used only in the most benign environmental conditions. Operations of virtually any significant magnitude require a deep water port facility and a permissive environment to complete offload and assembly operations in up to 10 days. To be sure, an effective sea-based pre-positioning system of the future must facilitate the introduction of tailored, capabilities-based, and persistent joint expeditionary forces. Supported by a fully networked communications architecture, these expeditionary forces must swiftly close the objective area already in possession of a comprehensive common operating picture and complete situational awareness en route to ensuring the attainment of full spectrum dominance. Development of future pre-positioned force systems should be in concert with JOpsC guidance.

The Sea Base concept embodies the Naval Service vision of future forward presence capabilities. A collection of fully networked platforms that may be tailored as necessary to complete a wide spectrum of missions, the Sea Base is intended to support all aspects of force reception, staging, assembly, forward movement, and force sustainment all while at sea in a

dramatically reduced time frame. Innovative force packages will be selectively staged, assembled and moved to the objective area via a variety of high speed surface and air connectors. Although fully aligned with JOpsC, the tremendous technological advancements required to make the Sea Base a reality may preclude its implementation anytime in the foreseeable future. The interface point friction caused by the forces of nature and the sheer volume of support required for ship to objective movement and force sustainment is enormous, dramatically limiting throughput capability. Landing craft speed, sea keeping, and at sea transfer capability must be greatly enhanced while air and surface ship-to-shore movement craft must improve lift capacity and all-weather performance in order to be viable.

Also aligned with JOpsC, the JPAC concept is an alternative to the Sea Base that also employs a collection of shipping to leverage maneuver space afforded by the sea to enhance forward presence capability and responsiveness while limiting personnel operating tempo and U.S. military footprint on foreign soil. Rather than force all pre-positioning functions through platforms at sea, the JPAC envisions use of an integrated system of afloat and shore-based preposition sites supported by high speed connectors that already have prototypes in service. Addition of the shore-based sites adds flexibility to the pre-positioning system reduces the number of interface points for selected equipment and increases the throughput of equipment flowing ashore. The shore-based pre-positioning sites provide an enhanced capability to verify the readiness of equipment and serve as a vehicle for military-military exchange and regional training opportunities. The 'down side' to JPAC is that it requires basing rights and additional force protection infrastructure in regions of the world that are already contentious. However, reducing afloat capability requirements of the JPAC through the integration of shore-based sites makes this concept more technologically achievable.

Through actions and written policy, the U.S. has affirmed its belief in a robust forward presence policy. International sea space provides tremendous opportunities for innovative force pre-positioning and reduced crisis response timelines. However the manner in which the international sea space is exploited in support of forward presence matters greatly. While continuing to maintain the Sea Base as a future vision, the U.S. should not squander the opportunity to enhance its national security while waiting on the advancement of technology to make the Sea Base a reality. The U.S. should seek the available, nearer-term benefits of a JPAC-like pre-positioning solution.

WORD COUNT= 6,970





## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics," in *U.S. Army War College Course 2 Selected Readings*, vol.I (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2004), 25.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, Joint Publication 0-2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 59; available from <[http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/joint\\_doctrine\\_encyclopedia.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/joint_doctrine_encyclopedia.htm)>; Internet; accessed 28 September 2004.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2002), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Interests for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21 (Winter 1997): 32.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>6</sup> Bush, iii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>8</sup> Nye, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Richard B. Myers, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 2004), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)*, Joint Publication 3-07 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), 302; available from <[http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/joint\\_doctrine\\_encyclopedia.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/joint_doctrine_encyclopedia.htm)>; Internet accessed 28 September 2004.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine for the Defense Transportation System*, Joint Publication 4-01 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2003), 28-19, 28-20.

<sup>13</sup> Henry B. Cook, "Sea-Basing and the Maritime Pre-Positioning Force (Future)," *Military Review* 84 (June 2004): 54.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>16</sup> Vern Clark, "Sea Power 21, Projecting Decisive Joint Capabilities," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 128 (October 2002): 7.

<sup>17</sup> Department of the Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 2003): 74.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>21</sup> Clark, 8.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Concepts* (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 2003): 4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>24</sup> John Shalikashvili, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, 1997): 1.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Concepts*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>35</sup> Bryan Bender, "Study Urges Bigger Role For State Dept," *Boston Globe*, 5 January 2005, sec. 1, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> Michael E. O'Hanlon, "Iraq Without A Plan," *Policy Review* 128 (December 2004/January 2005): 5.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations Concepts*, 21.

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